

# **A FRATERNAL REPLY**



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## FOREWORD

In 1908 the Synodical Conference met at New Ulm, Minnesota. The essayist was Dr. F. Pieper. His topic was THE WONDERFUL GIFT OF THE FRATERNAL FELLOWSHIP OF FAITH. The timely words of this essay adopted by our sainted fathers might well be addressed by them to us.

We read: "There is no honorable reason for schism or for separating oneself from the orthodox Church. All such reasons lie in the realm of the flesh. The most honorable reason as yet which Scripture gives is ignorance . . .

"Let us listen to what Luther says on this point. (He says), 'To cause dissension and division in doctrine is the Church's greatest and most destructive death-trap of all; something which the Devil also presses to the utmost' . . .

"If we would remain protected," the essayist continues, "against this terrible sin of disturbing the fraternal fellowship of faith, then let us hold watch over our carnal, resentful, haughty and stubborn heart. Here let no one be presumptuous. He who says, 'That cannot happen to me,' does not yet know aright his wicked heart." (All emphases by the essayist; Proceedings, Synodical Conference, 1908, pp. 33.34)

## A FRATERNAL REPLY

*"CONTINUING IN HIS WORD" is the title of a series of tracts issued by the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin through its Conference of Presidents. These tracts have been sent to all pastors of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod with the consent of its President. There are, however, certain inadvertent but serious inaccuracies in several of these tracts on which far-reaching conclusions have been based. Therefore these inaccuracies should be pointed out. They have been called to the attention of the Wisconsin Synod's Conference of Presidents (May 10 — 14, 1954).*

*However, to date we have received no assurance that these inaccuracies would be corrected. To the best of our knowledge nothing has been done to make such corrections. We are convinced, therefore, that in the interest of our Lord's cause, and for the sake of our future fellowship in Christ it is necessary that we bring these inaccuracies to the attention of our brethren. That is the purpose of this presentation.*

# INACCURACIES IN WISCONSIN SYNOD'S

## TRACT No. 3

The Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 3 ("EVERY SINNER DECLARED RIGHTEOUS") contends (p. 6) that in the doctrine of justification, which teaches that every sinner has been declared righteous in God's sight through Christ, "the COMMON CONFESSIOn gives an unclear picture of God's judicial act" and hence does not portray "the Bible picture" of objective justification. (Emphasis ours.)

Is this charge justified? Let us look at the COMMON CONFESSIO

There we read as follows: "We believe and teach: By His redemptive work Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence forgiveness of sins has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.) 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation,' II Cor. 5,19. Hence no sinner need be eternally lost on account of his sins. God offers this propitiation and reconciliation freely to all men through the means of grace. There is nothing in sinful man or in what he may do to merit God's declaring him righteous. God justifies the sinner solely on the basis of Christ's righteousness, which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith. Such faith is wrought in man by the Holy Spirit. Through this faith we not only receive from God but also retain the blessed assurance of our righteousness in His sight for Christ's sake. Cf. Romans 3-5; 8; Gal. 2, 16; 3, 29; Col. 1; 1 John 2,2." (Our emphases.)

Now, what is supposed to be wrong with this Confession? Wherein does it fail to present "the Bible picture" of objective justification? And why is it alleged to be "an unclear picture of God's judicial act"? The author of the Wisconsin Synod Tract No. 3 (p. 5) seeks to answer by means of an illustration. After quoting from the COMMON CONFESSIO

he says, "The prisoners stand convicted before the Judge. The Noble Benefactor has stepped in and 'secured and provided' FREEDOM for them." Then he asks, "But where is the declaration of the Judge?" (Our emphases.)

**Answer:** By the question, "But where is the declaration of the Judge?" the Wisconsin Synod writer implies that this declaration (or God's judicial act) is lacking in the COMMON CONFSSION, and that for this reason the COMMON CONFSSION fails to present "the Bible picture" of objective justification.

But we ask, Is "the declaration of the Judge" (or God's judicial act") really missing from this section of the COMMON CONFSSION? We reply, it is not missing. It is contained in the term, "forgiveness of sins." Note well. The COMMON CONFSSION does not say, "FREE-DOM" has been "secured and provided for all men (as the writer of Tract No. 3 puts it), but "FORGIVENESS OF SINS has been secured and provided for all men."

And we must realize that the phrase "forgiveness of sins" is forensic, that it includes within itself the declaration or verdict of the Judge, whereas the term "freedom" does not.

That the phrase "forgiveness of sins" is forensic (i.e. that it includes within itself the declaration of the Judge) has always been the position of our Church. In 1893 LEHRE UND WEHRE (Vol. 39, p. 83) said, "Aphesis Hamartioon" (forgiveness of sins) is simply and solely God's verdict and declaration that He will not look upon the sin before Him; or stated positively, that He looks upon the impious one as just and holy . . . Consequently the Synoptics also teach the imputed righteousness and the actus forensis."

We call attention also to what Dr. Theodore Diercks wrote in 1938, RECONCILIATION AND JUSTIFICATION (p. 41), when he paraphrased Quenstedt's statement as follows, saying, "Man's justification does not consist in two acts, in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but these two things are 'the negative and positive expression' of the same act, and either one expresses the whole act of justification." (Our emphasis.) Now let us show how clear the COMMON CONFSSION is by simply using the phrase above in connection with it. Then the COMMON CONFSSION would read, "Hence forgiveness of sins (or 'the whole act of justification') has been secured and provided for all men." Or let us substitute the expression used

in LEHRE UND WEHRE (see the previous paragraph). Then you would have, "Hence forgiveness of sins (or 'God's verdict and declaration that He will not look upon the sins before Him') has been secured and provided for all men."

Hence the picture portrayed by the COMMON CONFESSION is clear, and it is the Biblical picture of objective justification. It is a serious inaccuracy, therefore, when the author of the Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 3 substitutes the vague word "freedom" for the fuller forensic phrase, "forgiveness of sins," and thereupon charges the COMMON CONFESSION with presenting "an unclear picture of God's judicial act" in objective justification. The "unclear picture" is of his own making and cannot be charged to the COMMON CONFESSION.

At the foot of page 5 in this same tract ("EVERY SINNER DECLARED RIGHTEOUS") the author asks, "WHEN does God's justifying act really take place? Not until faith has been kindled in the heart? Or already at Christ's death and resurrection?"

**Answer:** The Synodical Conference has always taught that with respect to objective justification God's justifying act took place already at the death and resurrection of Christ; and that with respect to subjective justification God's justifying act takes place at the very moment when faith is kindled in the heart of the sinner.

So also in the COMMON CONFESSION. Concerning objective justification it teaches that "By His redemptive work Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence forgiveness of sins (or 'the whole act of justification') has been secured and provided for all men"; and concerning subjective justification it teaches that "God justifies the sinner solely on the basis of Christ's righteousness, which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith."

The conclusion of Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 3 (p. 6), namely that "the COMMON CONFESSION gives support to the thought that justification occurs only when faith is already present" (our emphasis), is therefore fallacious. It is fallacious because it rests on a failure to recognize the fact that the phrase "forgiveness of sins" is forensic and that it expresses in itself the entire act of justification.

## INACCURACIES IN WISCONSIN SYNOD'S

### TRACT No. 4

The author of Tract No. 4 of the Wisconsin Synod Conference of Presidents ("NOT BY MY OWN REASON OR STRENGTH") writes (p. 4), "We note that the Missouri Synod at that time (namely, at the time of its 1929 Convention) saw the need for a definite statement which would absolutely rule out the distinction between natural and willful resistance". The writer continues, "Such a statement was drawn up in the BRIEF STATEMENT which was adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1932 as its doctrinal position" (underlining ours)

**Answer:** This is totally inaccurate. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has never taken the position that a statement, "which would absolutely rule out the distinction between willful and natural resistance" is necessary. NOR IS THERE SUCH A DECLARATION TO BE FOUND IN THE BRIEF STATEMENT.

The writer of the Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 4 is mistaken also when he assumes that the EXAMINING COMMITTEE report, which he quotes on page 4 of his tract, was accepted as the official position of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod at its 1929 convention. Neither the Floor Committee (No. 19) which reviewed this report nor the plenary body of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod adopted this report of the Examining Committee. (See Proceedings, 1929, p. 111-113, English report.) Nor did the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod ever consider the mere rejection or acceptance of a distinction between a "willful" or "natural resistance" to be a matter for controversy with the American Lutheran Church. It is an inaccuracy when the Wisconsin Synod tract makes it appear as though this were the case. (See Tract No. 4, pp. 3.4.)

The position of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod on this matter was made very clear already in 1904 by Dr. Francis Pieper. In LEHRE UND WEHRE (Vol. 50, p. 297, par. 7) he wrote: "We Missourians have repeatedly been accused of failing to make a distinction between 'natural' and 'willful' resistance. Actually, however, this is not the real point of the controversy. One might classify this resistance (to conversion) in whatever way he will. We shall not engage in controversy with anyone about that. We are fully aware of the fact that with respect

to the classification of this resistance there is in the Lutheran Church no uniformity of expression. Only one point concerns us. And on that point we will never yield nor allow doctrinal latitude. The point that concerns us is this, that the discontinuance of that resistance which hinders conversion, whether it is called 'willful' or by some other term, be not attributed to the powers possessed by man. If this is done, then the decisive cause of salvation has been attributed to man, and the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, that man is saved by grace, has been vitiated." (Our emphasis.)

The important question in this matter, therefore, is not this, "Does the COMMON CONFESSION absolutely reject every kind of distinction between 'willful' and 'natural resistance'?" Rather, the vital question is this, "Does the COMMON CONFESSION allow for any kind of co-operation whatsoever, either in the area of the Law, prior to the "placement of the new life," or in the area of the Gospel, when the new life is being created?"

The COMMON CONFESSION says, "We believe and teach: The sinner's conversion takes place when God brings the contrite sinner to faith in Christ as his Savior. This change of heart with respect to sin and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin is the work of God the Holy Spirit, without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man. 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost' Cf. Acts 5,31; 26,18; Eph. 2,1-9; Jer. 31,18-19; Ezek. 11,19-20." (Our emphasis.)

The author of Tract No. 4 concedes on page 5 that these words of the COMMON CONFESSION should rule out every kind of cooperation. He says, "It may be asked, 'Doesn't this rule out any contribution by man to his conversion? Doesn't this rule out the thought that man can prepare himself for conversion by forsaking willful resistance?' To our way of thinking it should.'" (Our emphasis.)

We ask, what then is wrong with the COMMON CONFESSION on this point? The author of Tract No. 4 says, "But the fact is that the American Lutheran Church has always claimed to teach that. They have always said that we come to faith by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit through the Word, but at the same time they have always insisted that man's conversion is in a measure dependent on man's attitude or conduct." (Our emphases.)



**Answer:** The writer of the Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 4 is mistaken. He implies that the fathers of the American Lutheran Church have always taught what the COMMON CONFSSION teaches, and that they have always denied teaching any kind of cooperation in conversion whatsoever. The truth is that the fathers of the American Lutheran Church formerly taught that there is a certain kind of cooperation possible to man prior to the "placement of the new life", in the area of the Law. They taught that in this field man can refrain or abstain from "willful resistance" and so prepare for, contribute to, or cooperate in his conversion. LEHRE UND WEHRE (Vol. 52, p. 537), for instance, tells us that Dr. Schuette of the old Ohio Synod "defended a COOPERATION of man in conversion prior to the rebirth or vivification" ("Lebendigmachung"); and that Dr. Richter of the old Iowa Synod in support of this position said, "the refraining from or removal of willful resistance does not belong to the vivification" ("Lebendigmachung"). (Emphases ours.)

It was only with respect to the "quickenings" or "the placement of the new life" ("Wiedergeburt"; "Lebendigmachung"; "Setzung des neuen Lebens." Ibid. p. 537) that the American Lutheran Church fathers were willing to reject any kind of cooperation on the part of sinful man whatsoever, and this they were willing to do even "unto the thousandth part." For instance, in their Michigan City Colloquy of 1893 the Iowa and Ohio Synods (now A.L.C.) formulated the following statement on conversion: "Concerning . . . conversion we confess, that it (conversion) viewed as the placement (Toledo Theses, "or planting") of a new spiritual life" does not rest on man's cooperation, self-determination or his good conduct either to a half, a fourth or a thousandth part; nor does it depend thereon in the sense that it is effected thereby, but on the contrary is IN SOLIDUM a work of the Holy Ghost, who effects it through the Means of Grace and by the omnipotent power of His Grace . . . "(LEHRE UND WEHRE, Vol. 39, p. 259; see also the Toledo Theses, Chapter VI, b.)

The COMMON CONFSSION, on the other hand, rejects all cooperation of any kind in conversion, not only in the area of the Gospel, but also in the area of the Law; not merely with respect to "the placement or planting of the new life," but also with respect to the "preparatory"

change of heart towards sin (e.g., mortification or the 'terrores conscientiae') whereby man is made ready for the new life of faith. The COMMON CONFSSION therefore says not only that "this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin," but also that "this change of heart with respect to sin is the work of the Holy Gost, without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man."

By this trebled repudiaton of any cooperation whatsoever on the part of sinful man in the field of the Law, as it concerns his change of heart with respect to sin; and by teaching in Article II of the COMMON CONFSSION (under MAN) that "all men . . . willfully continue to transgress God's holy Law in thoughts, words and deeds" until God, who alone can do it, sets them free, the COMMON CONFSSION presents a true and forthright settlement of that which once had been an issue between the fathers of the American Lutheran Church and of the Synodical Conference in the doctrine of conversion.

### ANOTHER INACCURACY

We call attention to still another inaccuracy in Tract No. 4 ("NOT BY MY OWN REASON OR STRENGTH"). The writer says on page 5, "At the Houston Convention in June 1952, the Missouri Synod re-affirmed its stand on the COMMON CONFSSION as a settlement of the past controversies." (Our emphasis.)

This statement leaves the impression that despite the Wisconsin Synod's earnest request for a rescission of the COMMON CONFSSION the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod by resolution reaffirmed its stand upon it. The truth of the matter is that the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod passed no such resolution of reaffirmation at Houston, but instead decided to "take no action on Part I of the COMMON CONFSSION," asking merely that for purposes of study Parts I and II of the COMMON CONFSSION be treated as one document, with the understanding, of course, that Part II has not yet been adopted. Certainly this decision of the Houston Convention cannot be interpreted as an action of reaffirmation. (For further details on this action we refer the reader to "ANOTHER FRATERNAL ENDEAVOR," pp. 5.6.)

## INACCURACIES IN WISCONSIN SYNOD'S

### TRACT No. 5

In the Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 5 entitled, "IF THE TRUMPET GIVE AN UNCERTAIN SOUND," the author says (p. 1), "Now it may seem like a big jump from a trumpet's uncertain notes to the COMMON CONFSSION'S statements about the Inspiration of the Bible. But fundamentally both have the same serious defect. Their true meaning is not sufficiently clear. They leave room for more than one interpretation."

Let us look at these statements of the COMMON CONFSSION on Inspiration and see whether they are defective. They read as follows:

"Through the Holy Scriptures, which God caused to be written by men chosen and inspired by Him, God instructs and assures us regarding His will for us. The Holy Scriptures constitute His Word to men, centering in the revelation of Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Through the Holy Scriptures God continues to speak to *men in all ages until the end of time. He speaks as the infallible and unchanging God, whose message to mankind never changes. Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God. His Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and that our faith in Him is not in vain.* (Underlining ours.)

"We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith (cf. Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II). We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures."

The author of Tract No. 5 now continues (p. 2) to say, "At first reading, these paragraphs of the COMMON CONFSSION strike one as being an adequate presentation of the Biblical teaching that 'all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God.' The statement that 'the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word' appears to be a restatement of the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration

as it is believed and taught within the Synodical Conference. But when we trace the history of these words, we see them in an entirely different light.” (Emphasis ours.)

**Answer:** Let us “trace the history of these words” and see whether the author of Tract No. 5 (Wisconsin Synod) is justified in seeing them “in an entirely different light.”

### **1. The expression, “content and fitting word”**

The Wisconsin Synod writer of Tract No. 5 faults this expression because of its use in such documents as the 1938 DECLARATION of the American Lutheran Church and the 1940 PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT between the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church. It is claimed that the United Lutheran Church uses this expression, “content and fitting word,” when speaking of Inspiration, and yet “has been publicly charging since 1940 that this expression (as found in the PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT) does not mean Verbal Inspiration as taught by the Synodical Conference.”

**Answer:** Let us examine these documents one by one:

1. The PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT of 1940 reads: “. . . by virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3, 16; 2 Pet. 1,21), by which He supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word (2 Pet. 1,21; 1 Cor. 2,12,13), the separate Books of the Bible are related to one another, and taken together, constitute a complete errorless, unbreakable whole, of which Christ is the center (John 10,35). They are rightly called the Word of God.”

2. The DECLARATION of 1938 reads: “. . . by virtue of inspiration, i.e., the unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim.3,16; 2 Pet.1,21), by which He supplied to the holy Writers content and fitting word (1 Cor. 2,12,13) the separate Books of the Bible constitute an organic whole without contradiction and error (John 10,35) and are rightly called the Word of God.”

3. And the COMMON CONFESSION reads as follows: “Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their

entirety as the inspired Word of God. His Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that His Word is true, and that He will keep all His promises to us, and that our faith in Him is not in vain.

"We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word . . ."

We like the clear-cut presentation of Verbal Inspiration as it is found in the COMMON CONFSSION and in the BRIEF STATEMENT. Yet we can find nothing in the use of the term "content and fitting word" in the other two documents which permits one to deny Verbal Inspiration as it is confessed in the Synodical Conference, though the context may not be above criticism. While it is true that some pastors of the United Lutheran Church have claimed that the PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT to them does not mean Verbal Inspiration as taught in the Synodical Conference, it is equally true that a great number of the more liberal-minded United Lutheran Church pastors refused to subscribe to it because in their judgment it did teach Verbal Inspiration. See 1940 Omaha Convention Minutes (ULCA). For ULCA reaction see also TIME, Oct. 28, 1940, pages 36 and 39. The American Lutheran Church on the other hand has stoutly maintained that the PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT teaches nothing less than Verbal Inspiration.

The term "content and fitting word" moreover is practically identical with the expression used in the THESES OF AGREEMENT ("EINIGUNGSSAETZE") of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church and the Breslau Free Church of Germany (Adopted, January, 1948), where the terms "Sachgehalt" (content) and "Wortgestaltung" (formation of the word) are used. Since these THESES OF AGREEMENT were accepted unanimously by the entire Synodical Conference (August, 1948) as "doctrinally sound," it seems odd indeed that this almost identical phraeseology should be faulted when used in the COMMON CONFSSION. Surely, just as we do not cast aside the term "Verbal Inspiration" because it has been misinterpreted, neither should we cast aside the term "content and fitting word" because some misunderstand or misinterpret it.

## 2. "The Holy Scriptures in their entirety"

Concerning this phrase the writer of the above-named tract (No. 5, p. 4) says, "For many years the notion has been held by some that while the Bible 'on the whole' contains the inerrant Word of God, it also contains parts which are not God's Word but merely the words of some human author. The exponents of this idea are ready to speak of the so-called 'totality of Scripture' but not of the inspiration of all its parts and words.

"By its statements that the Scriptures 'in their entirety' are the inspired Word of God, the COMMON CONFESSION leaves room for this mistaken view that 'as a whole' the Bible is God's Word although some parts of it may be only man's word . . ."

**Answer:** It is true that there is a certain similarity of expression in the terms, "Scripture as a whole," "the Bible on the whole," "the totality of Scripture," and "the Holy Scriptures in their entirety." But these terms are not for that reason identical or synonymous, since things similar to each other are not therefore identical.

Surely no one will claim that to say, "I accept your statement as a whole" is the same as saying, "I accept your statement in its entirety"; or that the expression, "I agree with your letter on the whole" is identical with saying, "I agree with your letter in its entirety." The expressions "on the whole" or "as a whole" are synonymous with "in general," whereas the expression "in its entirety" is synonymous with the phrase "in all its parts fitted together."

Concerning the term "the totality of Scripture" the fact is that this phrase was never used, as far as we have found, with respect to the inspiration of Scripture, but only with respect to the interpretation of the Bible, and hence does not belong here.

The conclusion of the writer of Tract No. 5 (p. 5) is therefore wholly unwarranted and without support.

## AN INACCURACY CONCERNING COMMON CONFESSION PART II

There is a statement in the tract entitled, "A FRATERNAL WORD EXAMINED" (Wisconsin Synod), which also requires our attention at this point. The author of this tract on page 9 criticizes COMMON CONFESSION II, Art. VI, par. 2, which says, "The Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word, that is, God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words He wanted employed." The writer of this tract says, "We note . . . that the strong part of the statement ('the Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word') is followed by an explanatory clause ('that is . . . etc.'). which not only qualifies but weakens the previous strong statement. For to say that 'God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words He wanted employed' is just sufficiently vague to allow the idea of a 'limited revelation' and therefore a 'limited morality' . . . " (Last two underlinings ours.)

**Answer:** Here again we have a serious inaccuracy. The writer of this tract evidently proceeds on the assumption that the words "God moved men to write . . . etc." were added to describe the extent of Verbal Inspiration, whereas they were written to show not the extent but the manner of Verbal Inspiration. They answer the question, not "How much of the Scripture is verbally inspired?" but "In what way are the Holy Scriptures verbally inspired?" They tell us that the Holy Scriptures are verbally inspired in this way that "God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words He wanted employed." And that is an excellent description of the manner of Verbal Inspiration. The extent of Verbal Inspiration on the other hand is expressed in the sentences, "The Holy Scriptures are the verbally inspired Word of God," and "The Holy Scriptures in their entirety are the inspired Word of God," and "The Holy Scriptures constitute His Word to men," etc.

It is an obvious inaccuracy, therefore, to charge this section of the COMMON CONFESSION with teaching a "limited inspiration" and consequently also a "limited morality."

## INACCURACIES IN THE TRACTS THAT TREAT THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

The writer of the Wisconsin Synod Tract entitled, "A FRATERNAL WORD EXAMINED" attacks the definition of the Election of Grace as it is contained in the COMMON CONFSSION. In so doing he implies that the COMMON CONFSSION accepts the very definition of the Election of Grace which the BRIEF STATEMENT rejects. (See Tract, p. 9, par. 3.)

**Answer:** The definition of the decree of election accepted by the COMMON CONFSSION is by no means identical with the definition rejected in the BRIEF STATEMENT. The BRIEF STATEMENT rejects as a definition of the decree of election that "one part of God's counsel of salvation according to which He will receive into heaven those who persevered in faith unto the end." The COMMON CONFSSION on the other hand accepts as a definition of "election" the following, that "God, from eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life." (Our emphasis.)

Please note the difference! The COMMON CONFSSION speaks not merely of God's receiving into heaven those who persevere in faith unto the end, as does the BRIEF STATEMENT in this place; but it speaks of God's electing them "as His own." Now, when do we in the course of time become His own? We become "His own" here in time when we become believers in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3,26), before our reception into heaven. The COMMON CONFSSION therefore clearly speaks of accepting an "election of Grace" which chooses us and makes us "God's own" before our reception into heaven; whereas the BRIEF STATEMENT speaks of rejecting an "election of Grace" which has its effect only at the conclusion of our Christian life on earth, namely when we are received into heaven.

Hence the BRIEF STATEMENT and the COMMON CONFSSION are here not speaking of the same thing. It is fallacious, therefore, to imply, as the Wisconsin Synod writer does, that the COMMON CONFSSION accepts as its definition of the "election of Grace" the very definition which the BRIEF STATEMENT rejects.



## INACCURACIES IN WISCONSIN SYNOD'S

### TRACT No. 6

#### ("CHOSEN BY GRACE FROM ETERNITY")

On page 8 of this tract (No. 6) the Wisconsin Synod writer makes it appear as though the American Lutheran Church has not changed its position on the doctrine of Election since the time of its founding fathers, and that it has never admitted such a change. He writes, "Yet neither Synod (the American Lutheran Church nor the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod) will admit that it has changed its position in the least." (Emphasis ours.)

**Answer:** The Wisconsin Synod writer of Tract No. 6 is mistaken. The American Lutheran Church has publicly proclaimed a change in its doctrine of Election particularly with respect to the question of an "Election unto faith" (ad fidem) or "in view of faith" (intuitu fidei) as follows:

1. In 1881 Pastor Allwardt, one of the fathers and representatives of the old Ohio Synod (now A.L.C.), stated, "But this election unto faith we do not teach. Therein we are not agreed." (Proceedings, The General Pastoral Conference of the Missouri Synod, Fort Wayne, May 23.24, 1881, p. 26) And "I find this expression, 'election unto faith,' to be Calvinistic." (Ibid. p. 48.) And Pastor Rohe, another Ohio Synod representative, called the term "election unto faith" a "Calvinistic leaven." (Ibid. p. 49.)

2. In 1931 however, when Dr. P. L. Mellenbruch of the United Lutheran Church in his THE DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY said, "Election is in 'foreview' of faith (election intuitu fidei), Dr. Reu of the American Lutheran Church protested (KIRCHLICHE ZEITSCHRIFT, 1931, p. 423), saying, "Only with regret do we state that the doctrine of conversion as it is presented here is hardly Biblical NOR IS THE PREDESTINATION INTUITU FIDEI (in view of faith) TENABLE, especially not since the doctrine of faith is not kept free from synergistic elements"; (our emphasis) and

3. In 1933, while reviewing Dr. J. T. Mueller's English translations of Dr. F. Pieper's essay, "WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?," Dr. Reu (in KIRCHLICHE ZEITSCHRIFT, August, 1933, p. 502) wrote as follows:

"We are aware of the fact that apart from a few unhappy expressions, which Missouri however herself shook off at once, the Missouri Synod never denied the universality of Grace, and that herein lies the deep gulf that separates the Missourian doctrine of predestination from the Calvinistic . . . We write this in no way as though we were of the opinion that the Predestinarian controversy had been useless and that Missouri's position therein had been totally without foundation. On the contrary, we are of the conviction that also in this controversy God had something positive in view and has effected it; for to us, too, the PREDESTINATIO INTUITU FIDEI (election in view of faith) is an un-Scriptural THEOLOGUMENON, the PREDESTINATIO AD FIDEM (election unto faith) on the other hand the clear doctrine of Scripture." (Our emphasis.)

4. And in 1938 the American Lutheran Church made the position taken by Dr. Reu its official position, when in its DECLARATION it said, "We confess that in addition (to the Universal Plan of Salvation) there is an eternal election or eternal purpose of God, according to which we declare with Paul that the fact that we have come to faith and will finally be saved is due to nothing whatever in ourselves, nor in anything whatsoever that we have done or not done, omitted or not omitted, with natural powers or with socalled 'powers of grace bestowed upon us,' here in this life, but solely and alone to this eternal election or eternal purpose of God." And in Section C,4 of its DECLARATION the American Lutheran Church says, "Whenever Paul speaks of eternal election he does so with a feeling of unspeakable gratitude . . . but in no case implying that God had considered him and the rest of the believers better than others and had elected them unto faith on that account." (Our emphasis.)

And concerning the expression "intuitu fidei" (in view of faith) the DECLARATION of the American Lutheran Church, after showing that under circumstances this expression could be understood correctly, has this to say, "But the Scriptures and the Confessions do not say that the eternal election or predestination unto the adoption of children took place in view of faith. Hence for the sake of clarity in doctrinal presentation this terminology should be avoided." (C,6.) (All emphases ours.)

On this issue, therefore, the American Lutheran Church has publicly and officially acknowledged the election unto faith as her own. Consequently, the writer of Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 6 is mistaken when he says, "Yet neither Synod will admit that it has changed its position in the least." (Our emphasis.) He fails to take note of this open and public profession of the American Lutheran Church as herein indicated.

## Additional Inaccuracies

On page 5 of Tract No. 6 ("CHOSEN BY GRACE FROM ETERNITY") the author writes as follows: "That this error (an election in view of faith) still persists in fact is strikingly shown in the report of the Dakota District of the A.L.C. (1946), where we read, 'We object to this old Missouri heresy (i.e., election unto faith) which has not been changed or modified in the least since Dr. Walther introduced it in 1868 and reaffirmed it in 1877 and 1881, and we reject it as masked or crypto-calvinism. It is the same old raven with new gravy.' " The author of Tract No. 6 continues by saying, "In that same report (A.L.C. Dakota District, 1946) in connection with the doctrine of Justification we find a statement that might also be mentioned here: 'We reject the statement in this article that man cannot cooperate with God in the kindling of faith.' "

**Answer:** This quotation by the writer of Tract No. 6 inadvertently makes it appear as though the stand here taken was the position of the Dakota District of the A.L.C. Actually it was the report of a committee headed by two men, who since have died, and whose position was merely recorded in the records of the District. Their report was not adopted by the Dakota District but was referred to the American Lutheran Church Fellowship Committee. The Fellowship Committee in effect totally rejected this report when in 1950 it adopted the COMMON CONFESSION.

In Tract No. 9 ("THE ANTICHRIST") the Wisconsin Synod's writer is inaccurate when he says (page 6 — bottom paragraph), "The Brief Statement considers the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist a doctrine 'clearly defined in Scripture.' "

**Answer:** The Brief Statement says, "not to be included in the number of open questions are the following: The doctrine of the Church and the ministry . . . and of Antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture." (Brief Statement par. 44.)

The Brief Statement therefore does not say that "the tenet that the Pope is the Antichrist is a doctrine 'clearly defined in Scripture.' "

It says that the doctrine of the Antichrist is a doctrine "clearly defined in Scripture." (See also Another Fraternal Endeavor pp. 26-27; also The Lutheran Witness Vol. LXXIII, page 4, dated June 22, 1954.)

## TRACTS I AND II

### DO NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY

Tract 1 of the Wisconsin Synod's Conference of Presidents is entitled "LUTHERAN BODIES IN THE U. S. A.," and Tract 2 is labeled, "1938 — 1953". These tracts are chiefly historical and offer much information that is helpful and instructive. However, they do not tell the whole story. As a result wrong conclusions are drawn and issues are raised. Let us therefore take the topics one by one and add what needs to be told.

#### "The Sandusky Statement of 1938"

Wisconsin Synod's tracts No. 1 and 2 call attention to a statement adopted by the 1938 convention of the American Lutheran Church at Sandusky, Ohio. This statement reads as follows, "We are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines." (Tract 1, p. 6; Tract 2, p. 1.) (Our emphasis.)

**Answer:** These tracts fail to acknowledge the following facts:

1) that shortly after the issuance of this statement by the American Lutheran Church the Committee on Doctrinal Unity of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod registered its objection to this position; and

2) that consequently the American Lutheran Church in 1940 modified its 1938 statement by saying, "We declare by including this or a similar statement, we did not want to cast any doubt on the binding force of any Biblical statement. We concur with our Commissioners and say, 'To be sure everything that Scripture teaches is God's Word and therefore binding.' However, for clarity's sake we add: Not every traditional explanation of a Scriptural statement is binding . . . We thank God that it is not necessary for the establishment of Church fellowship to agree in every explanation of a Scriptural statement." (Our emphasis.)

To quote the 1938 statement of the American Lutheran Church without its 1940 modification, therefore, does not tell the whole story.

#### "The Friendly Invitation of 1947"

From the "Friendly Invitation" issued by the American Lutheran Church FELLOWSHIP COMMISSION in 1947 Wisconsin Synod's Tract No. 2 (p. 5) quotes, among other things, the following: "There is

'an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God." Tract No. 2 (p. 9) thereupon presents the Wisconsin Synod's official criticism of this statement. We read, "This position of the American Lutheran Church challenges the clarity and therefore the authority of the Scriptures (Ps. 119; 105). This can only cause confusion and disturbance in the Church." (Wis. Synod Proceedings, 1951, pp. 147 148.) (Our emphasis.)

**Answer:** 1. To be exact, the statement quoted from "The Friendly Invitation of 1947" is inaccurately described by the Wisconsin Synod as the "position of the American Lutheran Church." (See Tract 2, p. 7.) It was not formulated by the American Lutheran Church as such, but by its FELLOWSHIP COMMISSION.

2. We have always agreed that the statement quoted from "The Friendly Invitation of 1947" was faulty. Our Doctrinal Unity Committee therefore also took it up with the Fellowship Commission of the American Lutheran Church. As a result the American Lutheran Church Fellowship Commission, together with our Doctrinal Unity Committee, formulated the following statement, now embodied in the COMMON CONFESSION Part II, viii, B, 2 (7). It reads:

**"Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the complete Gospel, and it is for this reason that a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures is an indispensable requisite for Church fellowship." (Our emphasis.)**

Surely this clarifies and modifies the position taken by the Fellowship Commission of the American Lutheran Church in its "Friendly Invitation of 1947." And to tell the whole story, this ought also to be indicated.

### **"Scoutism"**

Tract No. 2 of the honorable Wisconsin Synod states (p. 4) that, "in 1944 the Missouri Synod abandoned its former position on the scout movement by sanctioning scouting under sponsorship of the local congregation." (Our emphasis.)

**Answer:** 1. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod gave up its opposition to certain phases of the Scout movement only after the BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA abandoned their former insistence on unionistic

services, spiritual aims, and their claim of authority in spiritual matters over local troupes, etc. This made our former objections to certain phases of the Scout movement and to certain types of Scout troupes unnecessary. (Proceedings, the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, 1944, p. 257.258.)

2. The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod did not sanction Scouting merely “under the sponsorship” but “under the full charge” and supreme “authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of the Lutheran men and boys in scouting” (On this question see also “ANOTHER FRATERNAL ENDEAVOR,” pp. 83-87)

## THE WISCONSIN SYNOD'S SIX QUESTIONS

In 1949 the Wisconsin Synod addressed six important questions to the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. Concerning these the writer of Tract 2 (p. 6) says, “These questions touched upon incidents of joint worship and work under conditions contrary to Scripture, for example, participation of Missouri Synod pastors in the program of the unionistic organization, Lutheran Men in America; cooperation of Missouri Synod representatives with National Lutheran Council members in matters admittedly no longer in the field of externals. All our efforts to deal with Missouri about these situations met with little or no success.” (Emphasis ours.)

**Answer:** 1. It was with the unanimous support of the Missouri Synod representatives at the Synodical Conference (St. Paul, Minnesota, 1952) that a joint stand was taken concerning Lutheran Men in America (See the Synodical Conference Proceedings, 1952, pp. 155.156.)

2. If the “admittedly no longer in the field of externals” implies that the Missouri Synod has admitted that it was no longer dealing in the field of externals and yet was persisting in cooperation with the National Lutheran Council in this area, we have never been informed where the Missouri Synod made such an admission.

## TWO QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF BIBLE TEXTS IN WISCONSIN SYNOD

### TRACT NUMBER 10

#### Question One:

Does Tract No. 10 wish to offer Matt. 18,19 as proof that we must agree in our confession of faith before we can pray together?

The text:

**"AGAIN I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT IF TWO OF YOU AGREE ON EARTH AS TOUCHING ANYTHING THAT THEY SHALL ASK, IT SHALL BE DONE FOR THEM OF MY FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN."**

Tract No. 10 uses this text twice. (Pp. 2 and 4.) On page 4 it speaks of praying with other Lutherans and says: "Since we are not one with every Lutheran in the confession of faith, we cannot pray with each and every one who claims that he is a Lutheran." In this context it introduces Matt. 18,19 with these words:

**"And God's Word takes for granted that we agree with each other whenever we pray together." (Underscoring ours.)**

If the tract uses Matt. 18,19 to prove that there must be an agreement in confession of faith before there can be joint prayer, then this application does not flow from the plain words of the text: "agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask." (Emphasis ours.)

#### Question Two

Does Tract No. 10 want to set up the claim that 1. Cor. 1,10 proves that before there is a joint prayer for unity "there must be evidence, confessional evidence, that they are of the 'same mind and of the same judgment' (1 Cor. 1,10) in this regard"? (P. 5.)

The text:

**"NOW I BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, BY THE NAME OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT YE ALL SPEAK THE SAME THING, AND THAT THERE BE NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU; BUT THAT YE BE PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER IN THE SAME MIND AND IN THE SAME JUDGMENT."**

The apostle does not say or indicate with a single word that the Corinthians are not to pray together unless they are of the same mind and of the same judgment. The text or context says nothing whatsoever about joint prayer or joint worship. Our conscience must be bound in God's Word, but it must be a Word of God that clearly speaks of a given situation, where our conscience is to be bound.

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## CONCLUSION

Here then we offer for consideration our reply to some of the issue raised by Tracts No. 1 — 10 of the Conference of Presidents of the Honorable Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States. Other points of importance not treated here are sufficiently answered, we believe, in "ANOTHER FRATERNAL ENDEAVOR" (Tract No. 8, p. 62ff. Tract No. 9, pp. 26.27: and Tract No. 10, p. 30ff. and 39ff.)

We trust that God, who would have "that there be no division among us," and that we "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1,10), will help us somehow to reach from heart to heart, and from brother to brother, with the "Mind of Christ," so that His Will be done through us and in us and by us. To this end we ask His blessing upon this presentation.

THEODORE F. NICKEL

ARNOLD H. GRUMM

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